(a) whether Pakistan has sought an agreement with India to prevent any unilateral banning of overflights in future by either country;

(b) if so, whether Pakistan has suggested a meeting of civil aviation officials of the two countries to ensure that one party would not be able to withdraw the overflight rights of the others;

(c) whether Pakistan had offered to restore only flight connections between the two countries and not overflights; and

(d) if so, Government's reaction thereto and the final decision taken in this regard?

THE MINISTER OF STATE OF THE MINISTRY OF CIVIL AVIATION (SHRI RAJIV PRATAP RUDY):

(a) to (d) Pakistan has suggested that bilateral civil aviation issues could be discussed at technical level between the civil aviation authorities of the two sides. These discussions are slated to be held on August, 27-28, 2003. The issues of direct air services, overflights, and the specific dates of resumption of civil aviation links on reciprocal basis would be discussed during the meeting.

Losses due to Pilots' Strike

†1651. SHRI MOTILAL VORA:
SHRI RAJU PARMAR:

Will the Minister of CIVIL AVIATION be pleased to state:

(a) the number of pilots suspended/dismissed due to their refusal to take flight towards the countries where cases of SARS have been reported;

(b) whether it is a fact that Government have restored the services of all those pilots;

(c) the estimated loss suffered by Government due to the refusal of the pilots alongwith the loss suffered due to hike in the prices of air turbine fuel; and

(d) the efforts made by the Government for making up the loss alongwith the outcome thereof?

†Original notice of the question was received in Hindi.

THE MINISTER OF STATE OF THE MINISTRY OF CIVIL AVIATION (SHRI RAJIV PRATAP RUDY): (a) and (b) The Management of Air India suspended 46 pilots due to their refusal to operate the flights on various sectors. However, no pilot has been dismissed from the service as on date. The Management has revoked the suspension of all the 46 pilots. However, disciplinary proceeding is continuing against them.

(c) Air India has suffered an estiamted loss of Rs.3.7 crores on account of pilot strike during April-May, 2003. The Company has incurred an additional expenditure of about Rs. 200 crores during the financial year 2002-03 *vis-a-vis* 2001-02 partly due to 11% increase in average fuel prices.

(d) The Government of India and the Management of Air India took all necessary steps for minimizing the adverse impact on Air India's operations and avoiding inconvenience to passengers. Air India maintained all of its USA/UK Europe flights and only a few flights on other sectors were cancelled. Air India also initiated appropriate disciplinary action against the striking pilots. Air India's operations are now normal as per their commercial requirements.

Utilisation of limited open sky policy

1652. SHRI C.P. THIRUNAVUKKARASU: Will the Minister of CIVIL AVIATION be pleased to refer to the answer to Unstarred Question 161 given in the Rajya Sabha on the 22nd July, 2003 and state:

(a) the details of the countries and Airlines making use of existing policy and having commercial agreement with Air India;

(b) whether any of the countries and Airlines are debarred from utilising the limited open sky policy; and

(c) if so, the reasons therefor?

THE MINISTER OF STATE OF THE MINISTRY OF CIVIL AVIATION (SHRI RAJIV PRATAP RUDY): (a) During the peak winter 2002-03 open sky policy, Lufthansa (Germany), Virgin Atlantic (UK), Emirates (Dubai) and Korean Air (South Korea) operated additional services. Also, airlines such as Singapore Airlines, South African Airways, Iran Air, Emirates, Austrian Airlines, Malaysian Airlines and Sri Lankan Airlines operated with bigger aircraft.